

VOL 21 | MAY 2021

NWAC President's Report

This publication highlights the various activities the President has undertaken throughout the month of March.



LORRAINE WHITMAN

Lorraine Whitman was elected as the President of the Native Women's Association of Canada on September 14, 2019. Prior to her presidency at NWAC, Ms. Whitman served as President of the Nova Scotia Native Women's Association and has been advocating for Indigenous women's rights over the past 45 years

May President's Report

On May 5, Red Dresses hung on trees across Canada, moving with the breeze to symbolize their missing wearers—Indigenous women whose violent deaths leave empty garments and shattered families.

It has been 11 years since Métis artist Jaime Black created the first REDress public art installation at the University of Winnipeg to honour Canada's missing and murdered First Nations, Métis, and Inuit women. It was inspired by a demonstration she saw in Bogotá, Columbia, in which women, garbed in red, gathered in a public square to grieve for their loved ones who had disappeared. Since then, thousands of others across Canada and in countries around the world have been hanging red dresses in trees on this day to add their voice to the growing cry of horror at these crimes, which the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Women and Girls has determined to be a genocide.

But, 11 years later, the deaths and the disappearances continue in this country and, indeed, across the Americas. Eleven years later, the government has produced no national action plan to stop the violence. And, Indigenous women are no safer than they were on that day when Ms. Black hung that first red dress in Manitoba. My heart is with those who are aching for a lost mother, grandmother, sister, daughter, or auntie.

On May 17, I put out a call on social media in support for Chantel Moore who had been shot by a police officer in Edmunston, New Brunswick, where there will be an outcome from the investigation in early June. The yellow dress was hung from trees by many in support of Chantel and her family and for all those other lives that have been lost at the hands of law enforcement.

It was with heavy hearts that NWAC and its members, the grassroots First Nations, Métis, and Inuit women in this country, learned that the bodies of at least 215 children had been found using ground-penetrating radar on the site of the former Kamloops Indian Residential School. I released a statement on May 31st regarding the tragedy and the 215 innocent young lives that were ended before they had the chance to begin. These are cherished children who left behind hundreds of grieving family members, many of whom likely had no idea that their beloved young sons or daughters had died.

We are both saddened and horrified by this discovery and we mourn the loss of these lives with our tears and our prayers. But I cannot say we are surprised. The Truth and Reconciliation Commission, which spent years investigating the tragedy of the residential schools, told us there were victims who had yet to be found.

We strongly suspect more will be revealed in the coming years and months as Indigenous people press for answers about what happened to the children who were taken, often against the wishes of their parents, into this system that was created for the expressed purpose of assimilation.

I called for the grounds of every residential school in Canada to be searched in this manner. That much is owed to the families whose children went off to these institutions and did not return. In addition, I am joining other leaders of National Indigenous Organizations in demanding that a full inquiry be held to determine what happened at Kamloops.

The families deserve answers. First Nations, Métis and Inuit people deserve answers. Canadians deserve answers. And these children, who were denied the right to live their full lives, deserve the justice that will begin to happen only when all of the facts about their deaths are made public.

May was a challenging month but also one of standing strong in unity. We honoured International Day Against Homophobia, Transphobia, Biphobia on May 17 online and across social media channels. We also honoured World Day for Cultural Diversity for Dialogue and Development on May 21 and International Day for Biological Diversity on May 22.

We are speaking up for what's right for justice and for the truth. Like a braid, Mother Earth is stronger than one hair. Remember that Indigenous women and girls stand strong together; we are even stronger in unity. Keep the circle strong.

Wela'lin, Thank you,



President Lorraine Whitman
 [@LWhitman_NWAC](https://twitter.com/LWhitman_NWAC)

My May Agenda

Press Releases

May 4—Red Dress Day without National Plan to Address Violence

May 31—The Loss of Hundreds of Children at Kamloops Indian Residential School, Demands Grounds of All Similar Institutions be Searched for More Victims

MMIWG Facebook USA

I attended a virtual panel on MMIWG and Indigenous women's issues, genocide, the RCMP, and residential schools. I also answered questions on information and statistics related to MMIWG, the National Inquiry's Calls for Justice, and the Sisters in Spirit Initiative.

MMIWG Advisory Meeting

The final meeting of NWAC's MMIWG

Advisory Group took place in May as the National Action Plan was being released. I would like to thank all the participants and volunteers who dedicated their time to this process. Thank you for your dedication.

Federal, Provincial, Territorial Meeting—Steven Guilbeault

I spoke to the standing committee on the importance of using Indigenous languages in Parliament and the legislative assemblies. Language is an important part of who we are as a people. To lose our language is to lose our identity.

Minister Carolyn Bennett

I met with Minister Bennett to discuss the federal government's deficient National Action Plan. The policy document masks the 231 calls for justice. We stated that this plan was not what we had expected the government to present.

Bill S-231—Senator Pierre-Hugues Boisvenue

With respect to addressing violence against Indigenous women and girls, NWAC believes that Bill S-231 can offer some of the improvements that are needed to better protect women under the law. NWAC will do what we can to support the proposed amendments.





AGA Committee Meeting

I held a virtual committee meeting with our AGA committee on the upcoming fall Annual General Assembly, which will be held virtually.

Board Meeting Presentations

Presentations with NWAC's PTMA board members are ongoing. The focus of the presentations is on updating the members of NWAC resources and how we can serve their jurisdictions better.

Indspire Awards

I was invited to present at the Indspire Awards ceremony, which celebrates Indigenous achievement. The ceremony is broadcast on APTN and CBC. Through Indspire, the Indigenous community honours the outstanding achievements of 384 First Nations, Inuit, and Métis individuals.

Teaching and Colouring Wildflower Virtual Workshop & Faceless Dolls Workshop

Many participants joined us for NWAC's online workshops. Our Resiliency Lodge presented the workshops via zoom and I hosted. These online workshops are a safe forum for grassroots women, who can express their thoughts and personal feelings about the trauma that they may have faced or just enjoy their time in a meaningful way.



Media Interviews

Media interviews were held with Global News, CBC French radio, National Press Gallery, APTC, CBC Toronto, CBC Canada, CBC Radio, CTV, Sputnik Russia, and Indigenous Services Media.



Lorraine Whitman @L... · 2021-05-19 ...
 Chantel Moore's family is asking everyone across the country to submit a short 7-second video to: staygoldenchantel@yahoo.com by May 24/21. Incl your name, where you're from & state [#JusticeforChantelMoore](#) [#Action](#) or [#StayGolden](#)
 Let us support Chantel and her family.
[#MMIWG](#)



172 views



Lorraine Whitman @L... · 2021-05-18 ...
 May 17 is International Day Against [#HOMOPHOBIA](#), [#TRANSPHOBIA](#) [#BIPHOBIA](#). To all my friends and family I give you all my support and love.
[#InternationalDayAgainstHomophobiaTransphobiaBiphobia2021](#)

Featured Tweets in the month of May



Lorraine Whitman @L... · 2021-05-07 ...
 We are seeing more rollouts of the vaccine in our communities. Protect yourselves and get your vaccine. This is not to be taken lightly. When I received the vaccine it seemed to lessen stress and anxiety. [#COVID](#) [#Indigenous](#) [#Metis](#) [#Inuit](#)





Native Women's
Association of Canada



L'Association des
femmes autochtones
du Canada

nwac.ca